

SENATE BILL 792

By Stevens

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 50-7-303, relative to unemployment benefits.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 50-7-303(a)(3), is amended by adding the following as a new subdivision:

(C)

(i) A claimant who fails to respond to an offer for a job within two (2) business days, or who fails to appear for a previously scheduled job interview without notifying the prospective employer of the need to cancel or reschedule the interview, is non-compliant with the work search requirements of the unemployment insurance program. A claimant shall not receive weekly unemployment insurance benefits for the week in which the non-compliance occurred upon the second confirmed incident of work search non-compliance.

(ii) The department shall establish a portal on its website, and an email and telephone hotline, for employers to report an unemployment insurance claimant who fails to respond to offers of employment or appear for previously scheduled job interviews.

(iii) Prior to denying a week of benefits to a claimant for work search non-compliance, the department must verify information submitted by an employer pursuant to subdivision (a)(3)(C)(ii) documenting an incident of work search non-compliance by a claimant.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 50-7-303, is amended by adding the following as a new subsection:

(f)

(1) An individual who receives unemployment benefits shall perform a minimum of five (5) work search activities per week in order to retain eligibility for benefits. Failure to perform five (5) work search activities per week disqualifies the claimant from receiving weekly unemployment benefits for the week after the failure. One (1) work search activity each week must be verifiable in real-time by the department. Starting with the third week of benefits and for every week thereafter, at least four (4) of the five (5) work search activities must be direct engagement with employers seeking a job. The department shall require each claimant to document and report work search activities on a weekly basis. Failure to complete the report constitutes a failure to comply with the work search requirement.

(2) The following actions are acceptable work search activities:

(A) Completing:

(i) An online or in-person job search workshop, job club, or job search networking meeting;

(ii) A job search assessment, including a personality, skills, or interests assessment;

(iii) Career direction research or work, such as a job search plan or a targeted employer list; or

(iv) Job search branding and marketing activities, such as completing a resume, cover letter, master application, elevator

pitch, LinkedIn profile, or uploading a completed resume to a job board allowing visibility to employers;

(B) Participating in a volunteer or on-the-job training opportunity likely to lead to paid employment;

(C) Taking a civil service exam; or

(D) Developing a complete resume in the state's employment service system.

(3) The following activities are both acceptable work search activities and qualify as direct engagement with employers, as required by subdivision (f)(1):

(A) Submitting a resume to an employer;

(B) Completing and submitting a job application to an employer;

(C) Attending and completing an interview with an employer;

(D) Attending a job fair; or

(E) Completing a skills test assigned by an employer as part of an interview process.

SECTION 3. This act takes effect January 1, 2024, the public welfare requiring it.